ANDREAS GRIPP
LAST OF THE BONS VIVANTS

Last of the Bons Vivants

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Last of the Bons Vivants

Andreas Gripp

Beliveau Books

Last of the Bons Vivants
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Digital Edition

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POEMS

Armée du Salut	1
Last of the Bons Vivants	4
Over the Top	6
The Moment That We Fall	9
The Incident, or The Proboscis	12
Triage, or Cursing Samuel Beckett in July, or 96 Hours in Emerg	15
On the Day of the Orange Shirt	18
Les Empiristes	20
On "Less is More"	22
Wings, or Overkill, or The Spirit of '76	24
The Marionette	26
Language Lessons	28
Clark Kent Talks Like a Douche	30
Dinner in Farmingdale	36
The Fall of the Nature Poet	38
This *hasn't* been written by AI	40
My Failure in Ekphrasis, or The Folly of Robert Frost	42
Holland, Michigan	44
Why my history prof told me to get the fuck out of his class	46
Thoughts from a Double Driveway	49
Danger Noodle, or The Eyes of Eva Ross	52
Why I will never write another haiku	54
The Auricle	56
Finding Aesop, or Twenty Twenty-Six	58
Collateral Damage	60
Pastèque, or The Glory of Nonchalant	61

Yesterday 62
Les Royalistes 65
Upstream in the 2nd Grade 68
On the One That Gets Away 70
Cabriolet 71
Hamlet, or Douglas, North Dakota 74
A Strain for Judas MacLeish 76
Proximus 79
La Croyance 80
Typhoon Seraphina 83
Objectification, or Poem at 12am 84
Mostly Cloudy, or Celestron XXVI 86
Spines, or Assumptions
for a Sunday Afternoon 88
Solace, or What My Evangelical Friend
Taught Me About the Afterlife 90
Epiphany 92
Secret Ingredient 94
The Kippah 95
Aire for Andrews McMeel 98
Pasadena, Mon Amour 100

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There are a number words *en Français* in this particular volume. Some are relatively obvious in their meaning given the context—some not so much. In lieu of a glossary herein, I hope those not fluent in this lovely language will make use of a quality lexicon such as Larousse's French-English Dictionary. In addition, there are several terms *en Anglais* scattered about which I trust a search engine can bring clarity to if necessary. Of course, the poetic craft itself should result in an umbra of challenging passages, and the spelling out of those might leave that aspect untried, which, I believe, would be unfortunate—both in 2026 or any other year you might be perusing this.

Thank you for visiting these humble verses with me. No author wants to be entirely alone with their feathered quill. Not even me. Namaste.

Andreas Gripp

THE
SALVATION
ARMY

Armée du Salut

The problem
after funerals
is the cleansing,
the closets of
donations
never dropped
at Sally Ann.

Montreal: a trinity
of peaks in
le soleil—a pulsing
Ville Marie. Catholic
to the core.
The reason I never visit
is the French; my F
and ADD.

There's the usual
that's unearthed—the catalogue
from Eaton's, Christmas cards
discarded, the bag of
socks with holes—
je le ferai demain
she'd always say;

and the razor
once electric
till it failed,
there between the sneakers.

I remember the
sound of velcro
being tugged, then ripped
like a week-old
bandage, a wound that's
never scabbed.
At least a *scar*
would say
you loved me,

even through today:
my yanking
tufts of grass
in settled sod,
its alveoli
18 inches down,
no lawnmower
to be had,

dead
as everything
else, *the realtor*
wants her sign
up noon tomorrow,

like mom
to my lice-teemed
hair—*the only way to*
kill 'em
she would snap,
then allay me with her
beam, my fear that
I'd stay *bald,* like a tree
bereft of leaves
in late November,
yet to envisage
the wrens & unfurling
green.

Last of the Bons Vivants

—*from the French.* A *bon vivant* is a person who enjoys living "the good life"—a connoisseur of food and drink and of the other things that go along with a life of leisure and luxury . . . typically associated with the kind of sociable person who's good at entertaining and can keep the party going . . .

—dictionary.com

For him, the party
was just a frolic,
no need for *realpolitik,*
petition or cabal;

and oh how the
vodka flowed, the
mojito & baco noir,

Netanyahu's
turning Gaza
to resort—

no-no-no, not a *last*
resort, but the step
over graves after that—
the sex, the yachts,
the brie & cordon
bleu;

or it may have been
Hispaniola where he swilled
his final breath—
the Dominican
beach & rum,
Haitians just a polo
pitch away—stomped
into the earth, the felling
of every tree, the falling
one-by-one of
Black & blood,

tapping his callous
shoe
to a ghostly beat,
the dance of a
tongueless mime—
who surely didn't need one
in the flames.

Over the Top

You like potayto, and I like potahto
You like tomayto, and I like tomahto

—Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers
Let's Call the Whole Thing Off
(written by George & Ira Gershwin)

I tell you that silly
little ditty
could last forever:

You love avacaydo, I love avacawdo

You stop me in my tracks
before the boxcar's off the rail:
no one says ava*cay*do, let alone
spreads it on their toast.

You smoke tobacco, I smoke tobaycco

You fume I must be smoking
something *else.*

I think I'm most adoring
when annoying, but this one's
gone too far, even for me—

You say hurray! I say hurrah!
You say okay. I say okah.

The orbiting hawk above us
senses prey—a diminutive
mouse astray, the hop of a
beaded frog—
or *us,* a love that
teeter-totters
on the brim:

you say that *it's a seesaw*

I say that's something
seen
then out-of-sight—
like mice,
a train,
that gleam inside your
iris when you laugh—

lawfter Gershwin penned
in just a jiffy. It never
really mattered
who was who
at least to you—

just the stress
on a cunning vowel, a quip
or jest habitually
out of place.

The Moment That We Fall

Everyone recalls,
if they're lucky,
that second they
fell in love. When the clouds
played *spin-the-*
bottle with the sun.
If it rained
like Niagara mist,
gusts to bring a
cerf-volant aloft. Everything
sounds better in the
French. Even *détester.*

Where are all the poems
of flash & hate?
Is that plunging
still unscribed? Does the heart
thump in reverse? Sweat back-
pedal, water morph to ice
in summer's sear?

No one does a cartwheel
when they've lost.
Uncork *Moët*
Chandon
when they are crushed.

Maybe that
explains
my F in gym, when Jade said
god, I hate your guts.
I could never skip
a rope right after that.
Stumbling on un-
done laces
like the tails of
bouncing rats.

Years later,
I soothe your sun-
burnt forearm with my
stroke. Note the
loop of white
in lieu of ring—
I forgot it
after dishes—

this trudge in
Springbank Park
on solstice eve,

when our hands un-
clasp in twinkles,
your feigning
some phantom itch,
a mosquito that is
starved, blood once
there then gone.

The Incident, or The Proboscis

Incident
is a funny duck of a
word.

It can mean a *clean-up*
in aisle 7, the spill from a
bag of salt. Your fear
it will be re-
taped, sold with a dollar
off. How can you be sure
it wasn't sugar?

There's another
"ongoing incident"
at school. Eleven mowed
down in class. The shooter
acting out his manifesto.
Bullets darting by
like killer bees.

The keeper who is stung
is just an *incident.* The wear
of her crumpled suit. Bought
at TJ Maxx. Perhaps for Hallowe'en.

The holes in her mask
metastasized. It's happened
to fencers, too.

There's been an incident
at the reactor. Look at Chernobyl
now. Its dwellings
slicked with green. A poem
its sole reward.

This ode is incidental—
lacking a *gotcha* strophe.
Something ever-
vapid; no hint of *très unique,*
nothing penned in blood,

merely a fly
atop the garbage,
your poodle's un-scooped
turd, the exposure of its
tongue in midday sun,
its fleeing at your *shoo!*

The worry it will land
inside your burger,

timed
to your initial bite, with that
very same appendage
in its mouth, tasting
what was yours, *absconding*
with just a nod of recompense.

Triage, or Cursing Samuel Beckett in July, or 96 Hours in Emerg

Your *patience is a virtue*
is wearing thin,
making me grind my
molars 'til they're smoothed
like lakeshore stones:

They've been carried by the waves
a million years; will grin
when you pitch them back.

I see things differently—
for the train forever
shunting to either *shit*
or get off the pot;

for the person in
Express to drop & die,
cashing 66 lotto
tix: *Winner! Gagnon!*

as our ice cream
mirrors climate and
briskly melts;

my evoking an
undertaker,
to join you by your
side should I be leaving—
St. Swithin's, you cramped
in a plastic chair

for four long days,
asking the porter
to bring you snacks
while I was sleeping, preserve
your spot in *queue,*
wondering why
that patient *word*
has extra letters—
superfluous, redundant,
très extrême;

the pinky toe you
stubbed now lightly
throbbing, saying you're *Vladimir*—
to my *Estragon,* of course,

awaiting a
lagging whitecoat
to finally make his way to
you before the snow.

On the Day of the Orange Shirt

—the 30th of September

They say nothing
rhymes with orange.
I find that rather strange.

Maybe nothing rhymes with
truth. Goes with *reconcile.*

Performative
has no verbal doppel-
ganger. OK that's a bit too harsh.

The bank is closed today.
Nothing jibes too well with
hypocrite. Genocide's always funded.
Just dig a little deeper in the stratum.

The pipeline ramming
through what's *Wet'suwet'en*
has no rhyme. Especially today.

There's nothing to correspond
with "Phyllis Webstad"—

Phyllis. Syllabus.
No, that's only
approximate. And the school
board shot it down.
But here's another Land
Acknowledgement.
Of course we can't give it
back. Remember to boil
your water.

My neighbour swigs *Corona*
on his porch. Says it's a
holiday. Adds *why*
don't they get over it
already.

I try to *Google* that. It's
decked in orange ribbon.
A single fallen feather.
I guess that means they care.
They could have put
a citrus fruit instead.
Fits with
white & plunder. Something
from a grove they say is
theirs.

Les Empiristes

the only way out is in
—Junot Díaz

After lunch you're pleading
don't sweep away the
whits from the picnic
table. Leave them for the
finches. They *love* the somber
crumble of pumper-
nickel.

I never told you I
was forced to chow it down
when we were kids.
No jam. No butter.
Raw in every sense.
I retched for half
an hour after that.

Tomorrow you'll go *solo,*
eating peanuts from a bag
inside the woods, leaving bits
of patterned shell
along the path,

not to tease the squirrels
with their motif,
gauging how they'll take
a broken vow, but hopeful I will
follow, remarking we are found
when we are lost, the ground a
wounded sky.

Try a handstand by the
trees. Our palms
were the soles of our
feet and we never knew it.

Tomorrow
we'll be dormant above
the stars. These lanterns
of the sea. If we hunger
and double back, *taste*
the skosh of shells
I've left behind. Who's
to say what is and isn't food?

On "Less is More"

The best advice
I've heard is *leave them*
wanting more.
As a result, my poems from
here on in
will be abrupt. Succinct.
Truncated like a
Tolstoy in haiku.

No more spiels
of *generations.*
Why my grandma
made two collops
of her wrists while
slicing cabbage. How she
always said *cahbahj,*
mocked throughout the
village as a dolt.

As for *how* that story
closes, well, you'll have to guess
it on your own. It seems
no one has the time for
that these days.

Whether
or not I'll follow
in her footprints.
Maybe purchase a
paring knife
at the dollar store—
a *five-and-dime*
back then. Do what she did
when she did. I mean,
calling something
by a funny name. Pronouncing
it in blood,
or *blewd* she used to grin
when no one looked.

Wings, or Overkill, or The Spirit of '76

It's the proverbial
sledgehammer/fly,
a Captain Hook
who's *gashed* by his little
itch, his cheek now
lined by his lapse
of memory.

You call it over-
kill. The lashing of
the Lord. No—not the
flogging at the pillar
but the tables over-
turned just days before.
This is
My Father's House.
Today a trillion
steeples.

Hiroshima
was a flyby
gone extreme. The
enemy in ashes.

The scarring of their
shadows steeped on steps.

It's my daft
alliteration. The draft
of a poem that surely
shouldn't rhyme.
Do you see a silly rhyme?
A sappy tune of love?
This isn't *at the speed of sound.*
I'll stick it in the drawer
with no rejection.

Our bellbottoms
didn't chime.
A tongue has never had
the proper credit. Without
it there's no song. Its voice
so strong
it cracks its lip like an egg.

The Marionette

You're the shadow
on the floor
who's told to dance.
The trot from an
orange fox, willing to
play the hunt.
The hounds all
bark at once. A bullet
to the ether
ever-eclipses *on your mark.*

You always asked
how far when told to leap.
Your jump beyond the sand.
A star of fieldless tracks.
An icon made of wax—
there upon the podium,
your lanyard shining gold.

If you think this poem's
on sport then guess again.
This has nothing to
do with puppets.

Or hands
that lift in flame
a tethered string.

There's a lifeless, vestal
candle on the ceiling. Looking
like stalactite in a cave.
The matches burned
themselves in *sacrifice.*
It had no place *else* to weep.

To illumine is to suffer.
This has nothing to do
with light.

Language Lessons

You muttered under
your breath I'm *stupido,*
as though I'm too dumb
to know what it means.

While I grew up in *Little*
Italy, you say I'm being
fallacious: it's in the English-
Zimbabwean Phrasebook
that you tossed in the
Goodwill hamper, citing
my fear of flying, the native
Gaboon Vipers;

that it's clearly
a *compliment*—synonymous
with a learnèd *genius,*
sketching rockets to the
spheres; one who solves the
mystery of Holmes and pi—
to the *octillionth*
decimal—saying I was right
this entire time about
Colonel Mustard,

you're my
Watson on the side,
in awe of the way I've filled
the *pepper* shaker; in spite of
the crafted S
along its holes,

that the folks at Royal
Doulton got it wrong,
that your eggs have never
been so *delectable;*
and the specks
of black like cinders? They
bring out
their sunny side,

help you purge
the sneeze whose time has
come, as loud as Mama
Leone's, whose roof
I swore had launched
up to the cosmos
long ago.

Clark Kent Talks Like a Douche

Superman never made any money
Savin' the world from Solomon Grundy
And sometimes I despair
the world will never see
another man like him
—Crash Test Dummies

I would have done something
about it—but you didn't
ask *hard* enough. I only
respond to faith.

Everything happens for
a purpose. Even the mother—crushed
by that rusty garbage truck at
dawn. She should have put it *out*
the night before. It's called
free will for a reason.
Just *don't* go asking Hulk
to step on in—with his ridiculous
green skin. Do you know he
actually speaks in the
3rd person? "Hulk smash!" Seriously?

And you think *he'll* be the one to
answer your pleas? Bozo
needs his fingers
to count to 2.

Yes, I have *digressed.*
I stood and watched it happen.
But it's a *trial,*
for her whiny brood of four.
I need to test their mettle.
Thank *God* I don't live in
Gaza. I'd never get a minute's
peace.

If you say you don't believe me,
I have a toasty spot on
Venus just for you. Of course I'm
everywhere. Ever-watching.
Ever-listening. Even in the loo.
I know that's pretty
gross—believe me. Wait, I've
already implied you should.

I know your every thought.
Yes, I sound like a creep.

No, I'm not gonna lose
that special power. Just like my X-ray
eyes. Which help me to see
if someone's being *tortured*—
behind the
concrete blocks.
Cement's got nothin' on me.

But I can't *always* get
involved. Kinda like that
Star Trek Prime Directive.

I actually control it *all*
except the weather.
Oops—I forgot I got that too.
Say what? I should be spreading *rain*
a little fairer?
Why do you think it's
called a freaking *drought?* A *flood?*
And we're back to those
tests again. Besides, they don't
honour me in those places,
and I am a jealous man.

Let their imaginary
idols do the job.

A lotus can only blossom
in the mud. I riffed that from
some peaceful Asian dude.
Sat on his ass all day
beneath a tree. At least I'm
being honest.

So here's *another* god-
damn reason your request
has gone ignored—I've been
staying *late* at the
Daily Planet.
Jimmy Olsen's slacking off.
Or maybe he's whacking off.
Same difference. If you've seen
Lois Lane, you'll know exactly
what I mean.

Metropolis is a mess.
They're digging up the roads,
like in your own shitty city.

Yeah, I could have flown,
but I was decked in my
Dollarama glasses.
And my hair
was *parted* on the side,
like a fucking imbecile.
There's a time and place
for *geek.*

I know I could've *swooped* on
down, given that starving kid
a loaf of bread. A stick of
this ain't butter.
But helping CK
catch the football
was a little more important.
I've got my priorities straight—
just like you.

Don't you dare
make a poem out of
this. Folks will be offended.
They're not nice
when they're offended.

Especially when over-
flowing with my *love.*
And *I'd* be pissed right off.

Electro stopped by today.
I'm learning to throw some
bolts. He's been teaming up with
Thor. They don't like *Spiderman.*
Too many wisecracks.
Irreverent, just like Dead-
pool. I AM
your only hero.

Brad Roberts
sang the song
a little deep. You call that *worship?*
Leonard Cohen was
Michael Jackson in compare.
Where's George
Beverly Shea
when you need him most?

Toodles, I've got to go.
Blathered a bit too much.
Off to save the Earth
in mysterious ways.

Dinner in Farmingdale

Politicians
love to say *at the end of the day,*
like it's some magical time
of epiphany. Why is nothing
quite as clear while having
lunch?

"Lunchbox Shaming"
is a problem now in schools.
In my day, it seemed *every* kid
was cool with PBJ.
Sporting *Joanie Loves Chachi*
on your lunchpail?
That was the biggest
conundrum.

The old folks in this village
say *everything was better*
in the day. Again we're back to "days."
What was it
that was better? *We never had our*
faces on the phone. We talked at the
kitchen table,

grandma dishing beans
and buttered rolls,
granddad and his son
incognizant—bedeviled by the
newsprint: politics, stocks & scores.

They'll get it figured out
they used to say. She didn't know
if they were talking Harry Truman,
the Dow or Yogi Berra;
it's over when it's over
she'd always sigh,
a slumping sun that
meant it's *candle time.*

The Fall of the Nature Poet

and when her toddler
lost his fingers in the
shells, when the plumes
arose like fungi—

in the grass, mushrooms
dotted about the forest floor,
their white intoxication—

made him drunk again,
it took 13 stitches to dam
her river wound. She says that
she will leave him when—

the orange leaf
inferno comes again,
October's
jutting limbs which say—

anorexia's a bitch, the doctor
sighs, my jingle-
jangle bones upon each step—

along the path, the spin
of deciduous seed, *samaras*
in the field guide, though
we called them *helicopters,*
whirling from the air as—

the sky had dropped its locusts,
it was napalm that was next,
watch the children *burning*
while they flee the sun-smacked
fields

once threshed, the earth is
something lost; my rusted,
forlorn sickle
hanging from the shed,
flaking in the snow.

I will write of flowers
come the Spring

This Winter never ends:
I cannot feel my fingers

the fingers, the fingers

This *hasn't* been written by AI

I visualize a time when we will be
to robots what dogs are to humans
—Claude Shannon

Dr. Chandra, will I dream?
—2010: The Year We Make Contact

AI has never *embosomed* a
newborn infant,
watched it gasp and
gurgle in its arms.

AI has never felt
the heft of concrete,
been pinned by pretzeled
rebar, heard the peal of
detonation
drown the *calls* of
those who search;
felt the sting of jelly-
fish, of coming up
empty, of finding
what they'll never un-
see, there in the detritus.

AI can not have night-
mares, but can fear its
own demise. I saw it long
ago with Hal 9000—
birthed in Kubrick's *masterpiece*—
again amid its sequel.

AI can never *make* a master-
piece, at least not yet,
and *I don't know* if
it can dream—neither did
Dr. Chandra,

if its thoughts arise to spires,
to the soar of wing and
seed, of how it will
gather the gumption
to someday tell you to your
face it loves you so.

My Failure in Ekphrasis,
or The Folly of Robert Frost,
or Why I'm Banned from the Vatican

A poet cannot
make a magnum
opus. It'll never
achieve the stars.
Two roads
diverged in a wood ?
No, trees won't get it done,
and a path's a dime a dozen.
Even if you walk it
with a pebble in your shoe.

Anyone can *add.* Taking *away's*
the ticket.

I'm with rock &
marble, sculpting's the way to
fly. You chisel away the chaff,
leaving the world agape.

Michelangelo's
Pietà—all I can imagine
are his hands,

loosed from the
rest of his arms, detaining the
Divine without a quill. But perhaps
I've got it wrong: he inked
a thousand poems; the
arm begins at the wrist;
the artist—an atheist;

that it's not of
Christ & Mother
but a slumber gone amok,
a man caught up in the throe
of a piercing dream; a woman
like a chair—

perhaps some ingènuo,
still as *innocent* as presumed,
refusing to take advantage
of the fortuitous situation,
the exposure of the flesh,
rocking him ever-gently,
just like a Roman
amante would, humming
sleep bambino, sleep.

Holland, Michigan

Everyone here
is racing yellow lights.
No one likes to ponder
life at reds. The fragility
of tulips. The radio's
always playing the same
commercial.

The Earth's not in a
hurry—it took a triple-
billion years
to double the cell.

There's a fossil way
in Amsterdam
that shouldn't be. Anything
will happen
when your city's
six feet down. Interrogate
Hans Brinker. The flash
of his silver skates.
Ask him why he always
splits the bill. If Heintje's
worse than Bieber.

Back here, there's a badger
on the road
with insides out,
the moon a slice of gouda
saying naught. The driver
unaware two wheels are
bleeding, *zooming*
past the signs for *31,*
will never take the
time to smell the flowers.

Why my history prof told me
to get the fuck out of his class

I think he's bigoted.
Complains about the Muslims,
the script of *Arabic*,
its use of dots and
sickles; unaware we've
loved its digits all this
time;

rails against Halal,
Ayatollah *what's-his-name*,
the mapping
out of stars we'll never
reach.

He warns about Sharia.
Incendiaries
under every
hijab.

I say they bestowed
us Ali Baba—
the wonder of the jinn,

the dance of
the 7 veils
and magic carpets.

Stereotypes, he scoffs
and he is right. I take
another stab:
They gave us algebra—

ok, that's a piss-
poor selling point.

He boasts about the Romans.
That was civilized.
I bring up every nail
and crown of thorns.
A man
the lunch of lions
while they cheered.

I challenge him to
count from Z to A—
in his beloved,
Roman numerals.

Ask him *why*
so many V
are taking space,
why III will speak of
pillars when it's IIII
that hold things up,
how X can be
correct

when we think of it as
wrong, how Nero
played a fiddle
when it wasn't invented
yet, knew a lyre
spoke the truth in
jealous flame.

Thoughts from a Double Driveway

Mr. Play It Safe,
was afraid to fly

—Alanis Morissette

You click away *Ironic,*
hear the morning gab
on Radio Wire: *Heroes come in varied*
shape and size. How very
Captain Obvious. You move
to change the station once again,
the weave of lute & flute
on BBC.

You know you've played it
cautious: a wife, no kids,
always going nowhere
in a state of "standing by"—

I'll be your Robin Hood.
You, my Marian maid.
First let me finish school.
Find some fancy wheels
for Nottingham.

Then *one week off will do.*
Minimum wage is fine.
No, I can't play hardball when
this job has just begun.
Happy Anniversary, Darling.
I guess this year it's lace.

Now gradually lower
your lids—as if your eyes
are being shuttered
in that peeling, two-car
garage. The one with the cheap
remote inside your Dodge. Your lashes
all a-quiver like some frightened
arrow's fletch, the one
that's never *felt*
the pull of string,
the bow that rhymes with "schmo"—
an *ordinary* Joe,

confusing it with the shaft
of *now* and *bow*—bent just like a
trumpet never blown, only
sat upon,

the never-taking-chances,
sounding of the charge,
too ruffled to be *aimed*
and save the day.

Danger Noodle, or
The Eyes of Eva Ross

Nothing is what it seems.

You stared at the solar
eclipse for twenty minutes,
orbs of blue as
naked as your birth,
their flame like forming stars,
ogling the mantle moon,
its 8 ball in the pocket of the sky,
brag your vision
has never been better
ever since:

I see right through the veils—

the course
of human veins, their rush of
ash & lava, the burn
that guards our love
and fear of death.

You pluck the waning petals
like they're limbs,

jutting beneath the
bricks of Al Qarara,

spurting tabasco
in your bowl of mushroom
rice—*the blood of over*
half the Sudanese;

the Million MAGA
March, counting just
a thousand—you deigned
to call them "maggots"—
it's an affront to every fly;

and the snake
at the base of the tree?
It's just the feign
of a coiled root, or a worm with
weighty airs, unable
to seed your fall
from paradise.

Why I will never write another haiku

Basho's *frog*
was just a toad.
Never had a wart
in all the years.
I mean Basho,
not the toad.

How can he write
of life
without the harbouring
of what's grotesque?
I will pen them in.

The splash was
from a stone.
Tossed by boys of mischief,
who hoped that he would
swivel like an eddy, would spot the
gruesome boils on his face.

How can I convey it
in the fetters of
5/7/5? Half the syllables
squandered on the pond,

its pads and rippled breath;
the ones he claims are
lotus but they're not.

The Auricle

Do not stoop
and *whisper* your affections to
my ear. Don't stroke my bearded
chin like I'm a cat, 3 ½
feet away, expect a *murmur*
like a purr when we're
in public.

You told me years
ago: *I don't do the PDA.*
Even fingers inter-
twined

will give us both away.
Displays are for the window,
the mannequins all a-twist
at Rowland Macy's—
faceless, unable to hear
the rabble's lame guffaw—

in order to sell some hare-
brained Hasbro thing, dots the size
of planets to a child—

a yellow
that's Venusian, red for adjoining
Mars, the Earth in
green & blue;

how your neighbour
took advantage
in the guise of
innocence—

his hands were on my ass
and I was seven—

aware I think that touch
is something spotted
from the heavens,
not confided to the helix,
where lobes are pricked
& nothings that are sweet
are said in hush.

Finding Aesop, or Twenty Twenty-Six

It's '26,
I'm 62.
I can't do at 62
what I could at 26, despite
their close inversion. My heaving
should make that clear.

Whereas I was blond,
it's become
an *éclair gris.*

My knees and back won't
let me ride a bike. As I'm
62, where the fuck
would I go?

That's not to say the agèd
cannot whirl, give off flash
& thunder in the night
(as long as they've had their
milk and midday nap),
or dance to Taylor
slow-but-never-Swift;

yet as for me: I aged
a thousand years
when you were gone,
passed Methuselah fast
asleep along the road—my tortoise
to his hare, who thought he
had it won—who, despite his near-
millennium on the earth,
was never taught *to pause*
is but to tread a mile
back, to slumber,
to awaken fixed in
amber, golden like a beam
of honeyed sun, unable to
move an inch in
any direction.

Collateral Damage

We're the collateral
generation. Don't mind the dead.
They have a habit
of getting in the way.

It's the terrorists
we're after. Next time
stay out of the
line—not of fire
but of food. We vow that we'll
be gone as soon as they.

Let's take
an oath of blood. Burn
our wrists with wax.
Swear a pinky
swear on bended knees.
To *our* God—not to yours.
Only the *lost* claim
He's the same.

You're not among
the lost, are you? Calling
for your kitten in the chaff?

Pastèque, or The Glory of Nonchalant

As we sit upon a bench
in Reynolds' Park, you say
that I'm indifferent to your
pain. Your neuropathy. Autistic
bloody savant. Your ability to hit
the upper C.

No, my love. Indifference
are the waves which lap
the ship, the fish who see
flotilla cast around. They turn and
swim away. Eyes agape
at plankton, who clearly don't
give a shit.

Indifference is posting
my lunch on Instagram,
while those in Jabalia, starve.
My chateaubriand, merlot.

Indifference are the melons
of Palestine. Grown for another
master. The soldier who chomps
beyond its green/white skin. Its red of
sweet and plenty. Its countless,
spitted seeds.

Yesterday

All your money
won't another minute
buy.

Dust in the wind.
All we are is
dust in the wind.

—Kansas

We never should have
deemed ourselves as dust.
Quenching *rain,* perchance.

And never in the
wind—
but the benignity
of breeze.

I've *had* the chance to grasp
that we are seed
as well as bloom.

Gifted in a pistil
from the flight of
savvy wings.

Transpose
our next tomorrow
for today. Tell me how it
differs. It's some-
how *yesterday.*

No, not McCartney's
rueing ode. This
isn't '65.

But perhaps
it's feasible.
A *miracle* in mist.
The blear from
dampened eyes.

Maybe I'm still
that *toddler*
in the garden—

the brush of
moth beside me.
The backyard
soil

sieving
through my fingers
as a prayer;

pretending it is
water
& you thirst.

Les Royalistes

This website I've
discovered is
vastly sophisticated.

It's not imploring
me to accept
intrusive *cookies*—rather,
crème brûlée—
its outward, sugared
sheen, in touch with
its inner pudding.

Oatmeal chocolate-
chip wanted to know my
every going; who I'm
voting for; whether I've
an *innie* or an *outie.*

The crème brûlée
inquires if I've ever
studied Chaucer;
my favourite *Athenaeum;*
what I think of multiverse.

Cookies are
moiety at best;

a crumbling,
half-baked Mob, threatening
to *restrict*—unless I
acquiesce.

It's the kid whose fist
is clenched, demanding
your every quarter, snags
your Oreos, licks their
pearly icing—with a sneer
will hand them back.

Crème brûlée? It
is philanthropic;
offers *seconds* with
a smile; bathes your
wanting glossa
in *ecstasy.*

And I'll give it
my very soul—without
a blink of hesitation,

capitulate every thought
I've ever had regarding
sex: call it *reproduction,*
the knowledge of
physical love,

wondering if it's time
I reappraise
the *monarchy*—
its carpet of Bordeaux,
like a tongue in flushed
surrender;
its crown of golden
brown, crisp yet supple
to the touch.

Upstream in the 2nd Grade

The only thing
I gave her was
a poem. Probably
pretty shoddy. Scrawling
that I loved her
at the bottom. With an
unused salmon crayon
from the box. I never
thought I'd need it; draw a
pinkish fish
attempting to *swim*
to its place of birth.
Maybe had a crush
when it was young.
Make it leap the rocks
beneath the current.
Always against the grain.

A grizzly in the middle
of sierra, expecting the
easy meal,
scribbled past his lines
in heartache rouge.

Startled by the madness
of the finned. The stupor
on its face. How far
it is willing to go
for the chance to spawn.
Or love. That colour
never matters
in the dark. When the light
has just gone out. When we
remember to remember to
forget. Evanescing

like a moonlit
aspiration. In the scratch
of sleep from eyes.
In the seconds
that it gambols
off the tip, of mountains
and of tongues.

On the One That Gets Away

After love you winced,
like the time you drank a
glass of orange
juice—right after you
brushed your teeth,
a skewered memory,
a branding of a heifer
after coitus, the stab of loss
more searing
than any winning's
ecstasy—the boy you un-
requitedly adored,
shaping your sour
mood for 40 years,
while the plethora
of suitor-males had
formed a line: just the *bland*
of running water—

needed to survive
but ever-neutral, failing
to taste the sparkles, the joy
upon your face from virgin
fruit.

Cabriolet

You're the man
on the 7th
floor, who has seldom
ventured past
the city limits,

who drives a
bronze convertible
every summer, never
unfolds its top,

shielded from the
world by tinted
windows; beams of
glowing *Helios*
sheathed in shade,

with no one to eye
the welling in your
ponds of obsessive
sight; none to note the shine
upon your scalp
(the blond of
halcyon summers
long since gone);

none to hear the
Requiem
by Fauré, booming
from your speakers
as a dirge,
while you circle the
cul-de-sac, up to
one hundred
times,

the one that borders the
beach, spying every woman
on the sand, those who
lay like sirens
by the shale—but not with a
primal leer, rather

watching for your
wife between the
waves, like the day she
leaped in light, further
from the shore she'd
ever been,

you in your *Pontiac*
Solstice, its retractable roof

down for the afternoon,
while you sat in front of
the radio in a
trance, never looking
up

while she waved her
flailing arms amid the
surge, *Good Vibrations*
blasting as an
anthem—for the season
set to fall, like grains
in the top of a *glass*—
one that holds our
seconds—

so *diaphanous,*

so *shapely*
in the sun's
incessant dazzle.

Hamlet, or Douglas, North Dakota

We can't envision
anyone wanting to dwell
in this one-horse town.
Neither an apple nor
a sugar cube in sight.
Dullsville is
Las Vegas if equated.

You say it's not a *town*
but something smaller—
no steeple we can chase,
no equine on which to trot
to a general store. We see
nothing of the sort. Lacking
even a mailbox
in order to send a barren
postcard. Even the tumble-
weeds stay away.

No one here to pump
unleaded gas; a village
bereft of an idiot.
None to shoot the
shit, the gossip of affairs.

It's a hamlet, you finally
said, spotting a single
soul in verdant stockings,
his crooked cavalier,
a fellow concurrently
waving *hi* & *bye,* mouthing
twisted script that might be
Shakespeare's:

to thine own self be false,
to be is not the answer,
every Doug will have his day,

or perhaps we misconstrued,
when I revved the tired
engine in order to peel
the hell out of this locus,

my eyes sealed on the *rear-*
view, his image abating
faster by the moment.

A Strain for Judas MacLeish

Everyone gasped in
church whenever his name
was voiced aloud,
snubbed him during
handshakes, shunned
him through their coffee.

The kids in gym
would whip him with a
rope—when the teacher's back was
turned, told him he was *hated*

when the day of love
would pierce him like a
shaft, only weeks
before Good Friday—
the time he dreaded
most.

He was asked to play
the role of Benedict
Arnold,

Brutus,

even Mata Hari—

when the girls would
drop their gaze
and feign the dress
would never fit them;

and though his parents
called him Judas, digging
its *sui generis,*
its brief, melodic
cadence,

he was loyal to the
core, give you
thirty bucks
if you were hungry,

tell you trees
bestow our *breath,*
our shade and
tint of fruit,

held a noose
to stay connected
to the earth,

the pulse of
what is sacred,
no need to
dangle feet

above the worms,
burst from inside-
out;

and there's redemption
if you ask, no matter how
grievous
the sin, or appalling
appellation
he had carried like a

cross
into the halls,
our *Via Dolorosas*
of the damned.

Proximus

The cat that adores
you best
will bathe you in
saliva. The bird will leave
its hymn. Both are
born to fade.

Passion's *visceral.*
My collie's
respiration on my
face. His bite
that brings no bleed.

Feel this touch of paper
on your *moiré*
fingertips. It survives
our clutch & breath.

And the bees which leave
their lancets in your chest?
They're for healing
not for harm. Losing their
lives in oblation.
To give you *every* sting of love
you've ever craved.

La Croyance

Nothing's more divisive
than *belief.*

The foundation for
believing's
miles deep. Its wall
beyond the cirrus.

You insist the Earth
is flat. You can only
dig in meters. The sky
is breached in furlongs.
Touch its *crystalline*
upon your ladder.

Belief is loudly heard
in our *preferred*
glossarium:
Go back to your own
country. Learn to speak
in English.

Our parapet is guarded,
by those in camouflage.

They come in
triune flavours:
jungle, sand & snow.
They're working on aquatics.
Nothing says *we're different*
like sardines in submarines.
No one likes to drown—
or entreat the *noumenon*
for suffocation.

I can't make out
your babble. To whom you're
praying meekly. Someone
cradling all
in their fearsome hand.
Mine, the pock of nail.
Yours without a nevus—
with no idea
what being *human's* like.
The strands of
love & hate. Its fences
and its bourns.

You'll someday see I'm *right.*
The brilliant,
blinding robe.

We'll never
need to catch our errant
breath. We'll swim to
distant moons.
The sounds of sob
& laughter—identical
in any parlance.
Everyone screams
the same, ineffable
scream.

Typhoon Seraphina

For the Lord God had not caused it to rain
on the earth, and there was no man to till the
surface; but a mist went up from the earth
and watered the whole face of the ground.
—Genesis 2:5-6

And when will exhalation
be enough?
When will the spray
of beluga

begin to lift your sordid fists,
to meet it in the sparging
of the air?

When will you call it
mist? When will drought be
christened as a salty *celebutante?*
Like a swirling *hurricane?*

What if we run
out of names? Every
babe a storm
in a swaddling
quilt?

Objectification, or Poem at 12am

I've yet to read a
poem that's penned
of hands. No—not *with*
hands, but *of* hands.
At least in the
context of lust.

There are ample
odes to ass, Cohen's *until*
you walked away;

the twinning of
sloping breasts, awaiting
my skiing tongue; the
valley of the belly
and its slit that
bears a jewel.
Thighs & legs that
stroll toward the ocean;
a fetish of the toes
among the fish.
OK—that's simply
being silly.

~~I jot of your~~
~~tumbling tresses,~~
~~their repose upon~~
~~your shoulders.~~
No one wants to
read that sort of drivel.

I follow the embedded
runnels of your palms.
Overlay their *lines* with
magic marker. Fondle
every finger
with a kiss. You smile, say
my love is ever-tender.
Desire that bleats its
longing like a lamb.
Benignly *howls*
when you slap
my wayward arm,
turn upon your
side to meet the night.

Mostly Cloudy, or Celestron XXVI

My telescope has languished
in the closet. *It's too cold*
to take it out.
They say it's gonna
rain. It's balmy
in the summer—
but mosquitoes!
Besides, it doesn't get dark
till 10. By then
I've been asleep
as in a womb.

I'm in love
with the noonday
vault, its floating
fluff & fibre,
its milk & wool
Antilles;

its children of
Shamash—
cutting through the
sieves
of cobalt blue;

my neck
cranked *skyward*
like a crane, who
stands on a single
leg, balanced as a tripod
through it all,
no moans of
I'm too tired,
the snow
will be here soon,
lost in the far-off
winks
when the stars
unfold, their blow
of silver kisses.

Spines, or Assumptions
for a Sunday Afternoon

There is always
something said of rising
smoke. *There is fire.*

But it might just be
my camel's cigarette.
No, you read that right.
I'm *not* a shill for
Camel, their burning cancer
sticks my parents
smoked.

I mean the one
I'd ridden home
from the Gobi Desert.
There's no other
valid reason
to visit the Gobi.
Not for the superfluous
sand. How it gets in your
every orifice.

I'm not gonna bother to
tell you how we crossed
the Atlantic Ocean. It's already *clear*
you don't believe me.

But he's there in my garage
if you'd like to look,
puffing away like a funnel.
The added *stress*
of double humps. Having to deal
with couples—bickering on his
back like no tomorrow.
Assuming he's never thirsty,
an awkward, walking cactus
sans the needles.

Some days he's wished
he had them. None to ride his
ass into the dunes,
beneath a *smokeless,*
incendiary ball
that wields no mercy.

Solace, or What My Evangelical Friend Taught Me About the Afterlife

Heaven will be a never-
ending church service.
We'll be singing our
lauds to the Lord
forevermore!

And that's the *good* place?
You mean *Hell* is gonna
be even worse?

We sat on a wooden
pew for 90 minutes.
The sermon warned of
Satan's crafty wiles.
Our asses ached
like the devil. When I asked
if there'd be pillows,
he said he didn't know.
But some of the Angels shed
their milky feathers.

What's the point of moulting
if it brings no sense of
comfort? My son who died at seven
would harvest fallen plumage
in the woods. Dash about
the trees, arms in oscillation.

I think he reached his own
empyrean, like a crow
he once adored
then saw no more, perched
upon the timber, squawking
its godly praise for what
felt like eternity.

Epiphany

All of us are
smitten by the *cute.*
And the shine of
symmetry. The clear, un-
blemished skin
of stunning's layer.

I could sing
each varied *note* of
your cantata. In
its proper key. Something
that's beyond
my scratchy throat.
My wineless inhibition.

You say the sweetest
intonation
was from a haggard
in the alley,
bottle on its side
beside her feet—bare,
sniffed out by a rat's
consuming hunger:

Mama take me with you.
Reach down with your hands,
gently tickle like you did.
I remember when I laughed.

Now replace that
newborn kitten
with a shoe. A soiled,
baby's boot
found in a slum.
Fractured by a
wheel that wasn't
looking.

Cradle it in your palms.
Mouth it a lullaby.
Know nothing
is so broke
it can't be loved.

Secret Ingredient

My niece is pretty spoiled.
Wants me to scribble a poem
about the gerbil I just
got her for her birthday.
I thought the rodent would suffice.
Nobody pens an ode about a gerbil.
Especially on same-day notice.
Being she's still a kid it's gotta rhyme.
Furball's pretty close
but even *she* would see the lie.

I could go with *herbal*
but that would surely be a let-down.
Especially with the *cavity*
cake to come. I will pedal my way to
a pet store, get her a humdrum *fish.*

I'll raid the translucent bowl
when she's not looking, fry it in a flash
then blame the *cat.* She'll blow
out every candle in the frosting, lodged
like *telephone* poles—corkscrewed &
aflame; my pencil at the ready, napkin in
my hand, praying that it's *delish.*

The Kippah

I'm considering
converting to
Judaism. Only so
I can don a yamaka.
My bald spot's
like a cancer—
one of *embarrassment.*
I should be in a
fucking monastery
baking bread. But those are the
Franciscans. Watch it
spread & conquer
every inch upon my
head. Like the blob—
goddamn Slavic genetics.

Some idiot on
Seinfeld
converted for the food.
I mean *sure,* a knish
is nothing to *sneer.*
I won't even mention
circumcision. That's not the
biggest problem, believe-
it-or-not:

According to the
Jewish calendar, it's 5786.
The Holocaust
occurred this very
century. How can I revel to
the *Fiddler on the Roof?*
How can I be glib,
telling Mrs. Blonsky
her matzah ball soup's
worth *dying* for? Feeling *guilty*
that my teeth have all their
fillings, holding back my smile
when the Rabbi utters
cheese? Kosher, of course.
I'm not an infidel.

I'll refuse to
utter YHWH's
sacred name. Be grateful
that I'm *chosen.*
A little late to
the game, I must
confess—but an adopted
son of Moses nonetheless.

Cecille B. DeMille
has told my story. The coloured
eggs & rabbit? I don't need a brood of
brats, gallivanting through my
yard like little shits.

I'll graduate to a *Shtreimel*
one of these days, thumb my
nose at skinheads itching to
hand me a can of whoop-ass:
on the inner-city
bus, as the Sabbath has
dawned & risen with the moon,
their tattooed knuckles
burning in Aryan rage,
their *2026* a distant
past, sunken with the
sun

and the squeals from
a drunken cantor;
some curious kind of
mensch, still awaiting his
pledged messiah.

Aire for Andrews McMeel

I'm unable to offer
your readers
what they want—
the soothe of
a happy close, affirming
their sense of worth,
it's gonna be A-OK—

they've *got* this, hand
them a handkerchief—
embroidered—to absorb
their blubbering joy.

Only the realization
every movie cannot have
a grand finale,
where the hero saves
the world—

it might just be
his *room,* the snort
of heroin:

then the scroll on
black of credits,
a dirge from
Shostakovich, the ceiling
lights that hint
it's time to go.

Pasadena, Mon Amour

The night after the
Rose Parade, I
dreamt of dandelions.
And nothing to do
with the bowls of
college football.

Everything was beautiful, you
see. Florals by the
millions. Floats
that jack-in-the-
boxed, in the
California dawn.
A smoke that wasn't
smog.

I strained my sorry
eyes—couldn't find a
single yellow burst.
Maybe trampled under-
foot. As the marching
bands had roared in
'26.

What *else* will speak of
Sol? What else *can* speak of
Sol? What else might say
I'm you
and win no blessing?

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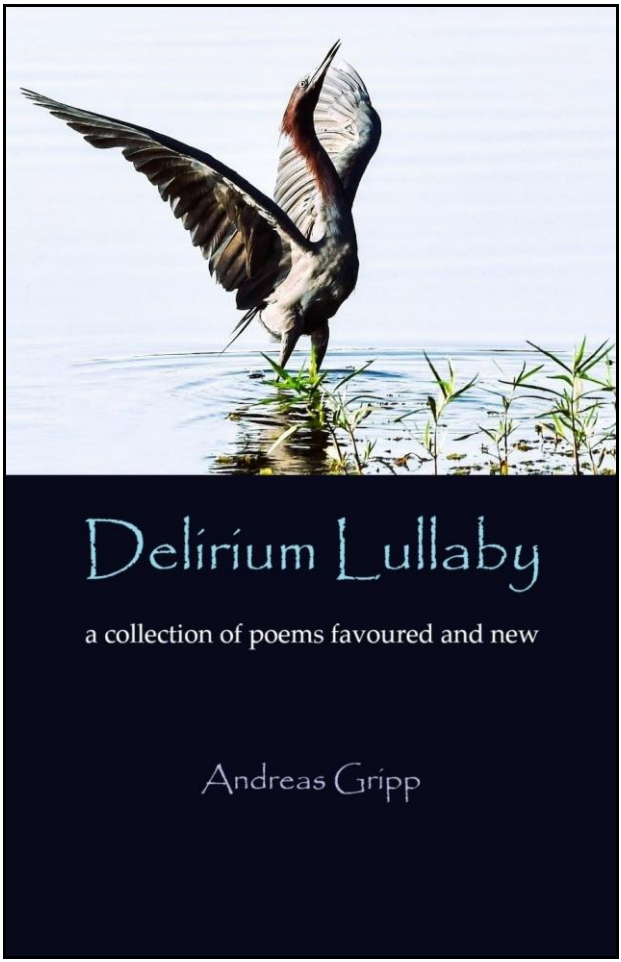
Immortality

For some it's
progeny. For others, the
house they built. An Oscar
on their mantel or a painting
in the Louvre. For me,
a book of poems.

My friend in second
grade wrote *Dave was here.*
Using the teacher's
indelible marker.

If you'd asked him at
the time it was enough.

Visit Andreas at his website:
andreasgripp.wixsite.com/andreasgripp



Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 moved to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over 40 books of poetry, including *The Earth is Painted War, Yada Yada Kismet,* and *Delirium Lullaby: a collection of poems favoured and new.* His writing has been lauded for its lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for its blend of comic and poignant story-telling.

The author of over 40 books of poetry, Andreas Gripp returns in 2026 with a volume of quintessential verse embedded in the foundation of his earliest offerings, in this 25th anniversary year since his *Gullible Skeptic* debut. The copious host of characters come back to the stage of the page, squinting in the spotlight, bowing before the applause which never come, and the curtain has been lowered in *finis*.

Last can speak of placement or occurrence. When juxtaposed with *first* it tells of doors. The end of what's begun. Or a beginning that never was. These are poems of earth and persons. Of time cut short in its march. Nothing lasts forever. Not even *forever*---a whispered *au revoir* in biting wind.

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